



Name: Russ Reno
Agency: DHHS



Man's Best Friend!

In 2001 my wife, Julie, decided we needed a dog. I wasn't at all pleased about this. It took three years before I finally agreed to join them on a walk. Surprisingly, I felt great afterward and decided to get up the following morning and take him for another walk. I felt great again!

When the alarm went off the next morning, I dreaded getting out of bed 45 minutes early. Baxter came running to my side of the bed as if saying, "You're taking me walking every morning for the rest of my life!" And I did. That began my active involvement in wellness walking. Within six weeks, I lost 10 pounds and wondered how much I could lose if I closely watched what I was eating.

Over the course of the next 10 months, I lost 35 pounds. The ninth anniversary of reaching my target weight was August 18th, and the 10th anniversary of starting my active walking is October 16th. Today, I'm about 5 pounds over my target weight even though I'm walking a lot more than I did at the beginning. It's frustrating at times, but if I wasn't walking at all, I would more than likely have added 30 pounds to my original weight. That thought keeps things in perspective.

A couple years ago, it occurred to me to plot my walking miles on the globe. It served as an additional motivation as I calculated the miles to cross continents. When I reached the United States, I really got into it and identified individual communities. On arriving at a town, I searched its website to learn more about that area. Then, I looked ahead to see how far it was to the next community, which spurred me to walk further to get there more quickly. (The new "Walk This Way" program has its own paths to record my steps and learn about sites all around the world, which I find even more interesting.) With that added inspiration, my daily average steps increased from about 14,700 in 2012 to 15,400 in 2013. So far this year, my daily average is even higher. Currently, I am 6% into my second trip around the world, walking across Quebec and heading towards Labrador, Canada.

The dog I never knew I wanted (or needed) saved my life, and I truly believe he did! My feelings changed about him and he became my very special pal. We enjoyed two daily walks together nearly every day. He turned 13 years old a couple months ago and, unfortunately, passed two weeks later. We hadn't taken many long walks in recent months because he just couldn't do it anymore. However, I now keep a similar walking schedule as if he is still with me. I owe him that tribute as well as my every effort to continue losing weight, because he gave me so much. After all, my new lifestyle is due to him and the fun of learning about interesting places in our world. He started my addiction to walking and it will continue, thanks to him.